

## Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 SAJ-01 EB-11 COME-00

TRSE-00 AID-20 CU-04 MC-02 /164 R

DRAFTED BY EA/TB:JBDEXTER:AVW

APPROVED BY EA:MSTEARNS

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R 242322Z OCT 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 210287

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TH

SUBJECT: BRIEFING NIX SUBCOMMITTEE ON THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 16562

1. WE APPRECIATE PROMPT AND HELPFUL RESPONSE TO OUR QUESTIONS FOR NIX SUBCOMMITTEE BRIEFING. BRIEFING WHICH TOOK PLACE TODAY WAS SHORT, HARMONIOUS AND BLAND. QUESTIONS CONCERNED MAINLY EFFECT OF RECENT CRISIS AND GOVERNMENTAL CHANGE ON UNITED STATES MILITARY PRESENCE. SUBCOMMITTEE ACCEPTED ASSURANCES THAT THAI RELATIONS WITH UNITED STATES AND UNITED STATES PRESENCE WERE NOT IMPORTANT ISSUES IN UPHEAVAL AND THAT BECAUSE OF SHARED INTERESTS, THAI CONTINUE VALUE PRESENCE OF UNITED STATES FORCES.

2. TEXTS OF SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND WITNESS (STEARNS) PREPARED OPENING STATEMENTS FOLLOW:

BEGIN NIX STATEMENT (UNCLASSIFIED). THE SUBCOMMITTEE WILL COME TO ORDER:

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THAILAND IS THE LAST REMAINING AMERICAN MILITARY BASE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. APPROXIMATELY 38,000 AMERICAN AIRMEN ARE STATIONED THERE AT SEVERAL AIRBASES. THIS MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IS SECOND TO WEST GERMANY AS TO THE STATIONING OF AMERICAN PERSONNEL.

ON THE 16TH OF OCTOBER, THE PREMIER OF THE COUNTRY WAS EXILED AFTER RIOTING BY SOME 10,000 STUDENTS IN BANGKOK. AT LEAST 100 STUDENTS DIED IN THE RIOTING.

THE PREMIER HAD LED A MILITARY GOVERNMENT FOR TEN YEARS. THAT GOVERNMENT APPEARED STABLE. YET LIKE MOST MILITARY GOVERNMENTS IT WAS SUBJECT TO SUDDEN AND VIOLENT CHANGE.

ONE QUESTION FOR THIS SUBCOMMITTEE IS WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR MEN IN THAILAND? IN ADDITION, WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT OUR OBLIGATIONS ARE TO THAILAND, WHAT PURPOSE AIRBASES SERVE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THAILAND SINCE MANY THAIS OPPOSED TO THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT WOULD LIKE US TO CLOSE SUCH BASES.

RECENTLY, A GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE REPORT STATED THAT A GROUP OF 70 AMERICAN MILITARY WERE BEING USED AS MILITARY ADVISERS IN VIOLATION OF LAW IN CAMBODIA. WITH THIS INCIDENT IN MIND, LEGISLATIVE PROHIBITIONS AGAINST BOMBING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA MAY ALSO BE INEFFECTIVE. IF OUR BOMBERS IN THAILAND DO NOT IN FACT PROTECT THAILAND, BUT WOULD ONLY SERVE THE PURPOSE OF RENEWED BOMBING IN VIETNAM, THE STUDENT COUP OF MID-OCTOBER MAY SERVE AS A REASON FOR CLOSING THESE BASES. END NIX STATEMENT

BEGIN WITNESS STATEMENT (UNCLASSIFIED).

THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND HEADED BY PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTIKACHORN RESIGNED ON OCTOBER 14 AND, ON THE SAME DAY, HIS MAJESTY KING BHUMIPOL ADULYADEJ APPOINTED JUDGE SANYA THAMMASAK TO SUCCEED HIM. PRIME MINISTER SANYA SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED APPOINTMENT OF A NEW CABINET WHICH IS NOW CARRYING FORWARD THE BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT.

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THE CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT WAS PRECIPITATED BY STUDENT PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE ARRESTS OF A NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS, MAINLY STUDENTS, WHO WERE PROMOTING A STUDENT MOVEMENT DEMANDING EARLY PROMULGATION OF A CONSTITUTION THAT WOULD RESTORE PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT TO THAILAND. IN THE WEEK FOLLOWING THE ARRESTS, STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS GATHERED IN BANGKOK FROM ALL OVER THAILAND AND, AFTER VIOLENCE BROKE OUT, THEIR DEMANDS TURNED

INCREASINGLY TO THE BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUE. IN THE FACE OF MOUNTING PRESSURE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND TO AVOID MORE SERIOUS DISORDER AND LOSS OF LIFE, THE PRIME MINISTER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER RESIGNED AND LEFT THAILAND.

AFTER APPOINTMENT OF THE NEW PRIME MINISTER, WHO PROMISED A CONSTITUTION WITHIN SIX MONTHS, ORDER WAS RESTORED. THE GOVERNMENT IS NOW FUNCTIONING NORMALLY AND THE CRISIS APPEARS TO BE PAST.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT REPRESENTS A SHARP DEPARTURE FROM THE POLITICAL PATTERN THAT PREVAILED IN THAILAND DURING THE PAST 16 YEARS WHEN THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONTINUOUSLY UNDER THE CONTROL OF MILITARY LEADERS. IN THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, THE PRIME MINISTER AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WERE ALSO THE SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS, SERVING CONCURRENTLY AS SUPREME COMMANDER AND DEPUTY SUPREME COMMANDER, RESPECTIVELY, OF THE THAI ARMED FORCES. IN CONTRAST, THE PRESENT PRIME MINISTER IS A CIVILIAN AND ONLY FIVE MEMBERS OF HIS CABINET OF 28 ARE MILITARY OR POLICE OFFICERS ON ACTIVE DUTY.

THE SHIFT TO CIVILIAN RULE DOES NOT, SO FAR AS WE CAN ANTICIPATE, FORESHADOW IMPORTANT CHANGES IN THAI FOREIGN POLICY AND WE SEE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT UNITED STATES INTERESTS WILL BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED. THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS COMPOSED OF ABLE AND RESPONSIBLE MEN WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THAI PUBLIC LIFE FOR MANY YEARS. WE KNOW THEM AND HAVE WORKED WITH THEM HARMONIOUSLY IN THE PAST. WE THEREFORE EXPECT NO CHANGE IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF COOPERATION AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING THAT HAS CHARACTERIZED OUR RELATIONS WITH THAILAND HERETOFORE.

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WE HOPE AND EXPECT THAT THAILAND WILL NOW ENJOY STABILITY AND PROGRESS AS STEPS ARE TAKEN TO RESTORE RESPONSIBLE PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE THAI PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THE INTERESTS WE SHARE AND THAT, AS THEY RECOVER THEIR DIRECT VOICE IN THEIR NATIONAL AFFAIRS, THEY WILL WANT THEIR NEW GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES IN OUR MANY COMMON ENDEAVORS.

THUS, WE SEE NO NEED FOR ANY BASIC CHANGE IN UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD THAILAND. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE SUCH SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE AS WE ARE ABLE TO HELP THAILAND MAINTAIN ITS SECURITY, PROMOTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPRESS ILLICIT NARCOTICS PRODUCTION AND TRAF-

FICKING. WE WILL CONTINUE TO HONOR OUR SECURITY COMMIT-  
MENT UNDER THE MANILA PACT EVEN AS WE WORK WITH OTHER  
NATIONS, INCLUDING THAILAND, TO ACHIEVE LASTING PEACE  
AND HARMONY IN ASIA. WE EXPECT TO CONTINUE OUR DIALOGUE  
WITH THE THAI GOVERNMENT REGARDING UNITED STATES MILITARY  
FORCES IN THAILAND, BEARING IN MIND THE MUTUAL SECURITY  
INTEREST THEY SERVE AND THE SOVEREIGN PREROGATIVES OF OUR  
THAI HOSTS. END WITNESS STATEMENT. KISSINGER

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** n/a  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 24 OCT 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1973STATE210287  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** JBDXTER:AVW  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** RR  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** n/a  
**From:** SECSTATE WASHDC  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Office:** ORIGIN EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 73 BANGKOK 16562  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 05 DEC 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <05-Dec-2001 by smithrj>; APPROVED <06 MAR 2002 by golinofr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** BRIEFING NIX SUBCOMMITTEE ON THAILAND  
**TAGS:** TH  
**To:** BANGKOK  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005